(7) The President should not stop any member from making his representation, unless the same happened to be prolix or irrelevant.

(8) At the request of two or three members, any subject of public interest might be discussed, the members having the right of moving resolutions and asking interpellations on the same.

(9) The Dewan's Address to the Assembly should give a summary of the important subjects represented at the previous session and the action taken thereon by the Government, besides foreshadowing the policy of the Government in the succeeding year.

(10) The proof of the abstract of every member's representation should be corrected and approved by him before the same was incorporated in the official proceedings.

The Member next disapproved of the intention of the Government to abolish several of the Municipalities and substitute Panchayats in their place. The desire of the people of certain municipalities for their abolition was due to the heavy taxes levied on them without any commensurate advantage, or improvement in the general health, sanitation and comfort of its population. The Panchayat Regulation did not afford as much scope as the Municipal Regulation, for protecting the health of the people and maintaining the sanitation of towns. The Village Panchayats would serve no useful purpose, but would merely harass the people by taxes. The Member next criticised the present method of appointing Panchayat Court Judges and urged that efficiency should, on no account, be sacrificed to communal considerations. He also suggested that in the election of judges to Panchayat courts the provisions of the Regulation might be strictly adhered to.

The Member next referred to local boards. They were very useful institutions and might be entrusted with the maintenance of roads, sanitation, medical relief and primary education within their respective jurisdiction.

He next dealt with certain aspects of revenue administration, and said that, as the work of the Tahsildar was not commensurate with his high salary, that office might be abolished or the number of Tahsildars reduced, so that three or four taluks might be placed under one Tahsildar. The collection of revenue could then be entrusted to the Assistant Tahsildars. He next pleaded for the increase of pay of the Proverthy subordinates and suggested that the pay of the Proverthikars and of the *pakuthi* accountants might be fixed at Rs. 30-50, and Rs. 15-20 respectively.

President's reply.—Your valuable suggestions are noted.

175. Constitutional reforms with special reference to the reconstruction of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly on a democratic basis.

Mr. N. Madhavan Nair B. A., B. L. (Member, Trivandrum taluk) observed that the history of representative institutions in Travancore was the history of the development and progress of the State during the last thirty years. The institution of the Legislative Council and the establishment of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly bore eloquent testimony to the far-sighted statesmanship of His Highness the Maha Raja who had thereby afforded ample opportunities to his subjects for political education and training in the art of responsible government. He pointed out that Regulation II of 1097 under which the reformed Legislative Council was constituted would remain an outstanding feature of Dewan Mr. Raghaviah's administration of the State.

The Member then scrutinised some of the Sections of Regulation II of 1097 and stated that a free use of the several powers and privileges granted to the people by that Regulation was considerably checked and hampered by the exclusion of a vast array of subjects from its scope, and by the rules framed under that Regulation. He next pointed out that the members of the Council should have complete freedom of discussion on the numerous problems relating to the internal administartion of the country, such as the development of ports and harbours, the extension of railways, and the improvement of the currency of the State. The Member declared that all matters that concerned the well-being of the people, excepting matters connected with the Ruling Family and the existing treaty relations with the Paramount Power, should be

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thrown open for discussion in the Council. The Member urged that Section 11 of the Regulation should be so amended as to remove the restrictions on the freedom of discussion referred to by him. He next criticised Section 16 (clause 4) of the Regulation as tending to narrow down the scope and extent of the right granted to the Council to vote upon the Budget and suggested that the distinction between votable and non-votable items should be removed, non-votable items being confined to allotments under reserved subjects. The restriction on the right of voting upon the salaries and allowances of officers drawing Rs. 125 and above, should be removed. The Member suggested that rule 30 of the rules framed under the Regulation be so amended as to admit of supplementary questions being put by any member. He was of opinion that it was necessary in the public interests to raise the number of members representing the general constituencies so as to secure a substantial majority of elected non-officials in the Council. He also disapproved of the Dewan being the President of the Council and suggested that the Council might have the right of electing its own President from among the members.

He then took a brief survey of the origin and growth of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly and stated that it had contributed, in no small measure, to the present progress and prosperity of the country. As specific instances of the achievements of the Assembly, the Member mentioned the abolition of taxation in kind, the separation of the Devaswom from the Revevenue Department, the institution of the reformed Legislative Council, the Nayar Regulation, and the extension of the Railway. He then chalked out the main lines on which the Assembly should be reformed. The Assembly should be reconstituted on a wider franchise with a statutory basis. It should have the power of asking interpellations and moving resolutions on all matters of public importance. The annual budget should be placed for the consideration of the Assembly before its introduction into the Council. No fresh tax should be levied, nor should any existing tax be enhanced without the consent of the Assembly. All matters affecting the finances of the State should receive the assent of the Assembly before they were finally passed. The legislative programme of the year should be placed before the Assembly so as to ascertain its views on the general principles involved. The Member was of opinion that the Assembly should have no legislative functions, but should be a purely deliberative body with power to discuss and vote upon the Dewan's Address to the Assembly foreshadowing the policy and measures to be adopted, besides continuing to possess the right of making representations on local needs. He thought it necessary that the Dewan should be the President of the Assembly so that the Head of the Administration might learn at first hand the wants and wishes of the people from the representatives of the people. The Assembly should be so reconstituted as to admit of its being given a definite place in the constitution of the State. The opinions of the members of the Assembly on the subject of Assembly reform were entitled to greater weight than the views of the members of the Legislative Council. He then dealt with the main contentions of the opponents of the Assembly reform and stated that the Assembly was a necessary institution, inasmuch as it would be a reflex of the country's opinion on all important public questions, besides laying down the policy for the Legislative Council to follow in the matter of legislation. As regards the overlapping of functions that was apprehended as a consequence of the enlargement of the powers of the Assembly, the Member said that such a contingency could be easily obviated by the framing of suitable rules and the evolution of conventions.

The Member then criticised the arbitrary powers of the executive of the State and stated that the want of continuity of policy in the administration, the absence of supervision of the work of departmental heads and the need for the initiation of broad policies tending to the development of the material resources of the State,—all pointed to the necessity for the early establishment of an Executive Council composed of non-officials and responsible to the legislature. The Member then suggested the appointment of a competent committee consisting of a majority of non-officials for formulating a scheme of constitutional reform. He said in conclusion that the goal of responsible government contemplated by him was an efficient executive, controlled by, and responsible to, the people with a liberal-minded Sovereign at the head.

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President's reply.—Mr. Madhavan Nair, your representation on constitutional reforms including the amending of the Legislative Council Regulation and placing the Popular Assembly on a statutory basis is noted.

176. Reform of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.

Mr. Aiyappan Pillai Matevan Pillai (Member, Kalkulam taluk) first dwelt upon the circumstances under which the Assembly was brought into existence and explained its uses and value to the people. He then said that the attempts now and then made to demolish that institution failed of their purpose. The best course would be to improve it on modern lines so as to afford the people an opportunity to exercise their voice on the actions of the Government. He went into an analysis of the rules regulating the conduct of business at the Assembly and expressed his opinion that from time to time the institution deteriorated in respect of its popular and representative character, since the rights of the people became resricted gradually as a consequence of the revision of the rules. Coming to the manner in which the representations of the members were being treated, the Member expressed his dissatisfaction and observed that, whenever Government proposed to take action on a member's representation, that member should be consulted before final orders were passed.

The Member maintained that the high degree of literacy, public spirit and general advancement of the people, coupled with their wide outlook and experience in the working of ponular institutions, were sufficient qualifications for their being given larger powers. He therefore suggested:—

(1) that the annual State budget should be discussed and passed by the Assembly;

(2) that the sanction of the Assembly should be obtained for the levy of new taxes; and

(3) that the power of interpellation should be given to the Assembly.

Mr. N. K. Padmanabha Pillai (Member, Neyyattinkara taluk) said that, since the inauguration of the new Legislative Council with enlarged powers, it had become a moot question whether the Assembly should be allowed to continue at all, and if so, what should be the nature of the reforms that should be effected in its constitution. The non-official opposition against the resolution for reforming the Assembly came as a surprise to him in view of the limitations and restrictions placed on the free exercise of the powers granted to the Council. The chief improvements the Member desired to bring about in the present constitution of the Assembly were contained, in broad outline, in the joint memorial of the members of the Assembly which was getting ready for submission to the Government.

The Member then proceeded to explain why the Assembly should be continued. The working of the Legislative Council during the past two years had convinced the public that the existence of the Assembly was imperatively necessary for safeguarding the interests and protecting the rights of the people. The Council had, in his opinion, failed to make its mark and had not carried into effect any legislative enactment calculated to promote public well-being, in spite of the enlarged powers granted to it by the new Regulation. The Member then enumerated several subjects on which the Council had not been able to effect any substantial improvement. The control of the Council over a large portion of the State expenditure was but feeble and indirect, while, as regards the expenditure on railways, harbour and political relations, the Council was absolutely powerless. Another defect pointed out by the Member in the present Council was the inadequate proportion of the elected element therein, which had enabled the Government very often to make the Council assent to propositions and measures which were of doubtful public utility, and which evidently had no popular support. The utter helplessness of the Council in the matter of carrying into force the measures of reform advocated by the people pointed to the absolute necessity for the continued existence of the Assembly on a reformed basis.

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